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A PUBLIC INFORMATION PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE USDA FOREST SERVICE AND THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

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Title: A PUBLIC INFORMATION PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE USDA FOREST SERVICE AND THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

Abstract: The need for better public information about outdoor recreation opportunities has been identified. New ways of using the national forests; non-traditional users such as the elderly, disabled, and urban; and new innovations in information technology have broadened the scope of information needs. At the same time, national, regional, state, and local strategies have been developed which call for expanded partnerships to provide outdoor recreation information and resources.

In partnership with the State of West Virginia, the USDA Forest Service has identified several action items which will be implemented to expand and improve information about outdoor recreation in eastern West Virginia. These are listed. The result should include increased user satisfaction.

Keywords: Partnerships, public information, visitor information services

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Summary: The purpose of the project is to identify partnership opportunities between the USDA Forest Service and the State of West Virginia which will enable potential visitors to eastern West Virginia to chose the recreation facility or area which will best suit their needs. Information should be provided which will relate to non- traditional users such as the elderly or disabled. Information should show the entire range of recreation activities and experiences available. User satisfaction should be increased because users will know what to expect before they travel to the area.

The project was begun by studying the changing recreation customer, the national emphasis on outdoor recreation, and the local situation in the eastern portion of West Virginia where the Monongahela National Forest lies. Lecture notes from the Clemson Outdoor Recreation Management Shortcourse, the publication of the interagency Task Force on Outdoor Recreation and Opportunities, "Outdoor Recreation in a Nation of Communities", the Monongahela National Forest Land Management Plan, and the West Virginia Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan were significant sources. Also valuable was the author's attendance at the National Developed Sites Meeting of the USDA Forest Service in Birmingham, Alabama.

The local information situation was determined through on-site investigations by the author and Assistant Rangers on the Monongahela National Forest. Brochure supplies and contents were investigated, visits were made to state parks and welcome centers. Calls were made to the state toll-free information number.

Contacts were made with the State of West Virginia Department of Commerce, Marketing/Tourism Director. A meeting between the Director and Forest Service personnel was held to address a list of potential action items which could be implemented to improve outdoor recreation information quality and availability.

As a result of that meeting, a final list of action items was agreed upon between the State of West Virginia and the Monongahela National Forest. These action items will be implemented over the next year. Those action items from the original list which were not selected for priority implementation during this coming year will be evaluated again in the future.

I. Introduction

Recreation on the National Forests is changing. Trips to National Forests for recreational purposes are becoming shorter and more frequent. Non-traditional users such as the elderly, urban minorities, and the disabled are discovering the National Forests and are often frustrated by poor information and facilities which are not designed to accommodate them. New uses of outdoor recreation resources continually tax information networks to keep abreast of changes.

At the same time, national interest in recreation is growing. The President's Commission on Americans Outdoors studied outdoor recreation resources, programs, and opportunities. The Task Force on Outdoor Recreation Resources and Opportunities to the Domestic Policy Council prepared an analysis, "Outdoor Recreation in a Nation of Communities", which established strategies to accomplish the broad goals of the President's Commission. These strategies stressed the need for partnerships to expand recreation opportunities and information, and for improved cooperation between states and other government agencies who provide outdoor recreation.

As an outgrowth of the call for more partnerships, better cooperation, and expanded information availability, the USDA Forest Service published "The National Forests, America's Great Outdoors", which set forth a National Recreation Strategy (NRS) for the Forest Service. The NRS calls for looking for funding sources outside the federal budget and creating and nurturing partnerships in recreation with other recreation providers - federal, state, local, and the private sector.

Expanding on the National Recreation Strategy, the Eastern Region of the forest service published "Eastern Recreation Strategy: A Guide for Action." The Region's strategy again called for building partnerships with states, neighbor communities, and adjacent landowners to provide quality recreation opportunities. Removal of jurisdictional barriers to provide comprehensive information to the public was also stressed.

As national and regional planning was going on, local plans were being prepared in some areas. The Monongahela National Forest Land and Resources Management Plan looked at the Forest's place in the recreation opportunities of the state and recommended cooperation with state and local agencies and private groups to improve management of the recreation resource and reduce conflicts. It further stressed the need for better public information and identified ways to do a better job of information dissemination. (Monongahela Forest Plan pp 24 - 26, 39, 185)

At the same time, the State of West Virginia was preparing its Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The SCORP identified issues and action items to address outdoor recreation in the state. Action items in the final SCORP included the coordinated marketing with all providers of outdoor recreation, improved public image, better highway signing, and partnerships with federal agencies.

All of these efforts, from the national to the local, highlight the need for better information for the outdoor recreation public and stress the opportunities of partnerships to address these needs. A detailed study of the quality and scope of public recreation information presently available found great opportunity for improvement at both state and federal agencies.

II. Statement of Purpose

By delineating the framework for a public information partnership between the State of West Virginia and the USDA Forest Service, this paper will begin a process which will lead to a joint information structure to insure that:

A. The potential visitor to eastern West Virginia will be able to choose the recreation facility or area which will best suit their needs.

B. Information will be provided which will relate to non-traditional users of outdoor recreation facilities such as the elderly and disabled.

C. Information will show the entire range of recreation activities and experiences available.

D. User satisfaction will be increased because users will know what to expect before they travel to the area.

III. Current Situation

Three aspects of the recreation situation today must be examined in order to structure a public information partnership between the USDA Forest Service and the State of West Virginia. These are 1) the "changing" recreation customer, 2) the new National emphasis on outdoor recreation, and 3) the local situation in the eastern portion of the state where the Monongahela National Forest lies.

The Changing Recreation Customer.

The traditional participant in outdoor recreation in a forest setting was a person, usually male or a family group, from a rural or small town environment near the forest (Crandall). The typical activities engaged in, primarily hunting, fishing, camping, picnicking, took place in undeveloped or rustic facilities with minimal conveniences. The user was familiar with the forest environment and felt at ease with the experiences of being in an unregulated situation. This traditional user is still with us, but increasingly today a different recreation customer is seen.

The appearance of the non-traditional outdoor recreationist signals an expansion of interest in the outdoors as well as other changes in American society. Symptoms of change and trends which reflect the changing American recreation pattern include:

1. The demographic structure of our population shows an increase in the older age categories. For the first time, there are more people over sixty-five than in their teens (McLellan, Crandall).

2. The trend toward two-career families has had an effect on vacation planning. Less leisure time and the difficulty of scheduling concurrent vacations have led to shorter, more frequent trips and vacations closer to home (Gorin). The average family now takes six weekend trips close to home each year, rather than one long one (McLellan). The number of visits to National Forest recreation areas is up sharply, while the average length of stay is down. Visitor days of recreation use grew only 2.4 percent from 1977 thru 1986, while the number of visits increased by four percent (Cordell).

3. The Baby Boom generation in their 30's and 40's are spending more on recreation and demanding more amenities (Gorin). Sales and rentals of recreation vehicles are climbing again after a decline in response to the energy crisis and higher gasoline prices of the 1970's (McLellan).

4. Urbanization of the population has caused decreases in those recreation pursuits which require intimate knowledge of the outdoors, such as hunting and nature study.

5. The emphasis on the individual seen in the 1980's and exemplified in urban areas by jogging and exercise has led to increases in high risk adventure recreation such as rock climbing (McLellan).

6. The rise in the number of single parent and single individual households has been noted. Studies have found that only twenty-three percent of outdoor recreationists are in a "typical" American family group (Crandall).

7. Increased foreign tourism in the United States and increased population shifts due to immigration have led to the need for multi-lingual programs and information (Crandall, Gorin).

8. New laws and regulations on access have increased participation in outdoor recreation by disabled individuals and groups (James).

9. Technological changes have also brought new recreationists into the forest. Recreation vehicles with better insulation have extended the use season to year-round, even in colder climates. Better information technology has made the public more aware of what the forests have to offer. Cable television and vacation video cassettes, computer access to information and reservations, 800 reservation numbers, and so on have revolutionized the way people plan their trips. New adult toys such as night vision devices, ultralight aircraft, mini-submarines, and electric all terrain vehicles are revolutionizing how the people use the land (Crandall).

All of these changes combine to bring a different population of outdoor recreation customers to the National Forests and their environs. Customers may be attracted to a positive idea of what they wish to do, or may be escaping built up stress and arrive with no clear idea of what to do (Schreyer). Often these visitors are not attuned to the forest environment and thus present new challenges to managers. New and innovative programs are needed to assure that these visitors have a safe and enjoyable experience in the outdoors (Woodrow).

New Emphasis on Outdoor Recreation

President's Commission on Americans Outdoors

In 1985, President Reagan established the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors (PCAO) to review existing outdoor recreation resources, programs, and opportunities available to the public, and to make recommendations to him that would ensure the future availability of outdoor recreation for the American people. Part of the reason for the PCAO was the dated, outmoded character of the 1958 study by the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC) with its emphasis on strong centralized government programs. Strongly centralized government programs were not consistent with current recreation planning philosophy. The PCAO issued its Report and Recommendations to the President in January 1987. In August of that year the interagency Task Force on Outdoor Recreation and Opportunities was chartered to prepare proposals for the President to further develop outdoor recreation opportunities. In fulfilling its assignment, the Task Force prepared a comprehensive analysis of outdoor recreation policy: "Outdoor Recreation in a Nation of Communities. Action Plan for Americans Outdoors". A brief summary of these findings will illustrate the future emphases which will be placed on outdoor recreation at the federal, state, and local levels.

The PCAO and the Task Force stress that outdoor recreation success will be based on two principles: community and cooperation. Recognizing that users of outdoor recreation are making more trips, shorter and closer to home, the Commission sought to emphasize opportunities close to home through the use of joint initiatives and partnerships. The Commission found information about the availability of outdoor recreation has improved significantly. The largest demand for better information may be for outdoor recreation opportunities closer to home that are not addressed by the tourism industry and travel services.

The Task Force established several strategies to accomplish the broad goals of the PCAO. Three of those strategies are important in the context of this paper.

First, federal agencies should join with state and local governments and private sector enterprises and associations to encourage a renewed outdoor recreation ethic. This is to ensure that public use of both public and private lands brings with it responsible user care for the land and its resources and facilities.

Second, develop an integrated outdoor recreation policy to improve coordination among federal land management agencies. To do this, federal agencies should proceed to organize information on the recreation opportunities and activities on federal lands so that it can be entered into privately operated state, regional, and national recreation information networks that are readily accessible to recreation consumers.

Third, encourage cooperative partnerships to expand recreation opportunities close to home.

The Task Force went on to state that, "Clearly there is a wide opportunity to improve public access to information about public campgrounds and related recreation services. The effectiveness of the supply and use of outdoor recreation opportunities by consumers will be at its highest level only when consumers are well-informed about their choices and free to decide among them. Linkage of the federal, state, and private recreation opportunities within state, regional, or national information systems is essential for an efficient consumer information service." (p. 118)

Forest Service National Recreation Strategy

The PCAO report was the genesis of a precedent setting effort within the USDA Forest Service, culminating in the April, 1988 publication of a sixteen page booklet, "The National Forests, America's Great Outdoors."

This booklet set forth a "National Recreation Strategy" (NRS) which stressed a willingness to try new ideas and approaches, to work with other people through partnerships, and to discover who the recreation customers are and how to best serve them. The NRS established a new strategy for managing recreation on national forests, based to a great extent on the public's desire for added emphasis on outdoor recreation. This desire was voiced in public response to the National Forest Land and Resources Planning effort. The NRS laid the framework within which to find creative and imaginative ways to take advantage of the outdoor recreation opportunities on the national forests. The NRS recognized that the customers were changing. It stressed matching the people and the place for customer satisfaction, looking for funding sources outside the federal budget, modernization of facilities, and creating and nurturing partnerships in recreation with other recreation providers by the federal, state, local and the private sectors.

Building on the National Recreation Strategy, The Eastern Region of the Forest Service published a White Paper of the same name and a booklet, "Eastern Recreation Strategy: A Guide for Action". The Eastern Region found that recreation opportunities can improve rural quality of life and promote economic development by matching recreation demand to the rural community needs. The Region noted that it is advantageous to team up with states, neighbor communities, and adjacent landowners. Partnerships, developed with states, federal agencies, local communities and the private sector will define complimentary roles of each organization to best serve the customer and will be the cornerstone of customer service and quality recreation management. A national forest's strong identification with forest or district boundaries must not become a barrier to planning and forming networks and partnerships to meet customer needs. Jurisdictional barriers that get in the way of cooperation and integrated use can be removed. Guidelines discussed in the booklet include communicating in plain language, using marketing techniques, enhancing information services to the public through "one stop shopping" in partnership with other governmental agencies, and providing information on a broad spectrum of recreation opportunity settings and services available in the area.

Other Program Strategies

In addition to the PCAO and NRS, other programs have generated emphasis on outdoor recreation. An example is the National Scenic Byway Program under which roads having special scenic or cultural qualities are designated as Scenic Byways. Scenic Byways will receive national publicity through the American Automobile Association, tourism groups, and television and print advertisements by the Plymouth Division of Chrysler Motors (Crandall). The Scenic Byway program is yet another example of promotion which can be expected to attract non-traditional users to the National Forests and their environs.

Both traditional and non-traditional recreationists come to the outdoor recreation experience with individual expectations and needs. The NRS has provided added impetus for research into the key ingredients which make up a quality recreation experience. These ingredients have been found to include pre-trip information, directional signing, getting settled information, the condition of the facilities, the condition of the site and surrounding area, information on what there is to do, security, on and off-site services, a diversity of possible experiences, and the elimination of distractions (Petty). Research at the Southeastern Forest Experiment Station has generated the following priority listing of things to do to improve customer satisfaction (Cordell).

1. Provide accurate information.
2. Preserve natural beauty.
3. Provide recreation close to home.
4. Good access.
5. Coordination and partnerships with other providers.
6. Improve services.
7. On-site management.
8. Resource quality.

The items which have most often been emphasized in the past, on-site management and resource quality, are the lowest priority. The opportunities to provide for greater customer satisfaction lie instead in providing good, reliable, timely information.

The Local Situation.

Two local planning efforts served to highlight the growing importance of outdoor recreation to the people and local communities of eastern West Virginia. The Monongahela National Forest Land and Resources Management Plan (MNFLMP), completed in 1986, and the West Virginia Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), completed in 1989, both show that the land and resources are present to support a major emphasis on recreation and the people of the state approve and support expanded outdoor recreation emphasis.

The Draft MNFLMP described a fairly typical mix of resource use. Timber harvest levels were planned to take advantage of the excellent wood products of the area and to attempt to regulate the harvest. Recreation plans in the Draft were to essentially do more of what had been going on over the past decades. The response to the Draft Plan was from a large number of individuals and sometimes strongly voiced. It became clear that the people of West Virginia view the Monongahela National Forest as a "special place" where remoteness and lack of visible management is important. Reviewers favored more remote areas than had been identified in the Draft, with more emphasis on dispersed recreation and wildlife habitats. As a result the National Forest revised the MNFLMP. The Final MNFLMP created several components to respond to the public's desire for more emphasis on recreation and less on commodity production. These were:

* A reduced level of development activity will occur over the entire Monongahela National Forest.
* Dispersed recreation will be emphasized.

* Approximately 75 percent of the forest will be designated for semiprimitive recreation.

The Final MNFLMP contained the following Goal Statements and standards:

* Manage the spectrum of recreation opportunities that exist on the Forest with emphasis on recreation activities that require a large land area... and facilities to support that use.
* Cooperate with, and coordinate plans with, other federal, state, and local agencies and with private groups to improve the management of natural resources and reduce potential conflicts.
* Promote public safety by informing users what to expect when they visit the Forest.
* Make optimum use of news media to make information available to the public.
* Prepare publications as needed to explain current issues... and new opportunities available to the public.
* Provide maps and Forest Service literature to community business, clubs, offices, schools, local governments, and public contacts.

The major emphasis in the MNFLMP was toward providing remote conditions and dispersed recreation with highly developed recreation sites to support the use of the remote areas. The plan recognized the responsibility the National Forest has to provide accurate and sufficient information so that the visitor may have a safe and enjoyable visit. There is a large gap, however, between that ideal and the actual situation today, and much work remains to be done in the sphere of public information.

Recreation use on the Monongahela National Forest has mirrored the trends found across the nation by the PCAO. Overall visitor days of both developed and dispersed use has dropped slightly over the past few years, but there are strong indications that the number of visits is up. At the

Seneca Rocks Visitor Center, for example, visits were up last year to a total of 122,000. This represents a sixty-six percent increase over the previous year. Visitors are discovering the forest and use from urban areas such as Washington, D.C., Pittsburgh, and Baltimore is increasing.

The Monongahela National Forest participated in a March 29, 1988 coordination meeting to prepare an update of the West Virginia SCORP. Representatives of the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, the Corps of Engineers, and the Park Service also participated. Discussions focused on how the various federal agencies and the state could better coordinate outdoor recreation activities and planning. The final SCORP document was published in May, 1988. It contained the following observations.

The Forest Service, and in particular the Monongahela National Forest, administers the largest resource base providing outdoor recreation opportunity in West Virginia. The state's strength is its abundance of natural, scenic, and undeveloped recreation lands. These areas are the basis for the state's tourism industry. Efforts must be continued to enhance handicapped accessibility. There is a limited awareness by special populations of recreation opportunities.

The SCORP went on to identify issues and action items.

Issue: Lack of public information on existing recreation resources.

* Develop, implement tourist signing on non-Interstate highways.
* Seek increased funds to expand promotional efforts.
* Additions on state highway map or develop separate tourism map.

Issue: Inadequate coordination among agencies who market outdoor recreation opportunities.

* Coordinate marketing.

Issue: Improper use and under use of semiprimitive recreation.

* Advertise resources and proper use thereof.
* Develop unified/coordinated marketing program.

Issue: Lack of public support (especially political) for outdoor recreation.

* Improve public image linking public/private recreation to economic development.

Objective: To increase public knowledge and awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities available in the State.

Priority Action: State and Private

* Department of Highways will investigate the feasibility of a tourist oriented directional signing program on non-Interstate highways in West Virginia.
* Department of Highways and Department of Commerce will consider additional information on major tourism attractions in future editions of the State highway map or develop a separate tourism map.
* Department of Highways will investigate the possibility of increasing the number of tourist information centers at key entry points into the State and encourage local tourism organizations to establish such centers.
* Department of Commerce will continue the aggressive marketing and promotional campaign, forming partnerships where feasible.

Priority Action: Federal

* Federal agencies will seek to form partnerships.
* Federal agencies will seek to have their facilities included within the overall State Tourism and Recreation Marketing Program.
* Federal agencies will seek to inform the public about the proper use of semiprimitive areas.

Local Public Information Situation

With the emphasis on outdoor recreation and public information found in the Forest Plan and SCORP, the mandate exists to reach out to the publics, both current users and potential visitors. A review of the current situation, however, reveals that there is great opportunity for improvement.

Outdoor recreation is an empty opportunity if the potential customer does not know it exists. The new, non-traditional urban customers do not have time to search for facilities. Information about outdoor recreation opportunities must be made available where the potential customer lives. Information is a primary ingredient in achieving customer satisfaction. Most, if not all, recreation is specialized and customers need to know where-to and how-to information to fit about the specialty of their interest (Petty). The most common public source of information is the newspaper (Siehl), but whatever the source, information must be accurate and convey the actual experiences available (Shafer).

It is generally recognized that it is more difficult to market services than it is to market physical goods because services are difficult to describe or grasp mentally (Syme). Concepts of the Recreation Opportunity

Spectrum (ROS), a system which stratifies recreation opportunities by the visitor's experience expected, can be very useful in allowing potential visitors to understand what experiences they may expect in the outdoors. This is true, however, only when ROS concepts are related in simple, easy to understand language, free of jargon (Bacon).

An example of the importance of good pre-trip information is provision for the needs of the potential disabled user. Disability often leads to a loss of spontaneity. The disabled need to know accessibility provisions of the site before they leave. Notations of accessibility and altitude of all sites must be available on brochures and maps (James).

A review of the content of West Virginia State Park brochures for those parks within or close to the National Forest shows that each brochure makes at least some reference to the National Forest or a particular recreation area or attraction. Although the Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area was incorrectly identified on one brochure as a National Park, there is a consistent effort on behalf of the state to recognize the contributions of the National Forest. In addition, the West Virginia State highway map shows national forest lands and recreation areas. There is no tabular listing of Monongahela national Forest sites, however. In addition to the State Parks brochures, the West Virginia Department of Commerce, Marketing and Tourism Division publishes the booklet "West Virginia Outdoor Recreation/Spectator Sports". This excellent brochure gives full and accurate information about the National Forest recreation opportunities in the areas of backpacking, hiking, hunting and fishing, nature interpretation, nature trails for the disabled, rock climbing, and cross country skiing. In all cases the referenced recreation areas and offices are correctly identified and mailing addresses and telephone numbers are given.

In contrast to the State's efforts to give the visitor information on the entire spectrum of opportunities available across the State and near each State Park, Monongahela National Forest brochures make no reference at all

to State Parks. The only National Forest publication which makes any reference to State Parks is the Forest recreation map which shows park locations but has no tabular listings, mailing addresses, or phone numbers. The National Forest Recreation Opportunity Guide (ROG), which is intended to be a one-stop recreation information source for the national forest area, contains a section on State Parks, but it is out of date and in need of revision.

A review of literature available at Forest Service offices, conducted with the assistance of District Recreation Assistants, showed that the offices are inconsistent in the display of West Virginia recreation brochures. One district office displayed no State recreation information at all, while other offices and the visitor centers provided a complete choice to the visitor.

Another aspect of public information where improvement could be made is the training of people who meet the public, especially receptionists, visitor center staff, and those who routinely answer telephone inquiries. It is usually impossible to get a second chance to repair a bad first impression. Employees who meet, talk on the phone with, or correspond with the recreation visitor must be trained in customer service (Norton). This is not now the case. They are usually not trained in public information skills and are generally not knowledgeable about the recreation opportunities available. This is particularly true as it relates to knowledge of what other agencies provide. To test this, the author asked several national forest employees to phone the state's "800" recreation number to request information about national forest recreation. The phone service was unable to provide them with specific information on the national forest, but always offered to mail information. This information, when received, consisted of the forest "mini-map", and the Outdoor Recreation brochure discussed above. Similar tests of National Forest receptionists yielded mixed results. Knowledge of state parks and forests was variable and incomplete. It is clear that opportunities exist for information partnerships and joint training (Coutant).

An important aspect of recreation planning and management is to provide signing that enables the visitor to easily and safely locate recreation facilities. Most visitors travel from urban centers on interstates and main highways. It is important to provide information on these roads about special attractions and facilities. There are few cases where anyone has been criticized for providing too much directional signing (Petty). Both the SCORP and on-the-ground observations show that there is a great need for improved signing in the eastern portion of West Virginia. Lead-in signing from interstate and other major highways is almost totally lacking. The signing on highways nearer the recreation facilities is generally better for state parks than for Forest Service recreation areas. On-site interpretation and "what to do here" signing is also spotty at best and could be improved.

The Forest Service has a responsibility to use ordinary and reasonable care to keep its premises reasonably safe and to warn visitors of any danger. (Hronek) As more visitors arrive who have no background in outdoor recreation in remote areas, no "woods lore" experience, and no training in the hazards associated with natural areas, it will be even more critical for the Forest Service to provide the information these visitors need to have a safe and enjoyable experience in the outdoors. This will include pre-trip planning information, lead-in and on-site signing, and interpretation.

IV. Methodology

Research Methods

Research methods included literature review, personal communications with experts in recreation management from across the country, and a review of state and Forest Service recreation information currently being provided to the public.

Lecture notes from the Clemson Outdoor Recreation Management Shortcourse were a major source of information. In addition the author had the opportunity to attend the National Developed Sites Meeting sponsored by the USDA Forest Service in Birmingham, Alabama in December, 1988. Discussion at that meeting of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors, the National Recreation Strategy, and partnerships proved valuable to this paper.

Information about the display of State of West Virginia recreation information in Forest Service offices was obtained from Monongahela National Forest Assistant Rangers and personal observations by the author. Several members of the Monongahela Supervisor's Office staff were enlisted to make phone calls to the West Virginia recreation "hotline" 800 phone number and request information about National Forest recreation. The author made a trip to the State of West Virginia I-79 information building at the WV/PA state line and two state parks to determine what National Forest information was available. Forest Service and state recreation brochures and maps were studied to determine whether they were providing information which would be useful to non-traditional visitors.

The Monongahela National Forest Land and Resources Management Plan and its appendices were valuable sources of data, as was the West Virginia Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. Excellent information about the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors, partnerships, and the growing emphasis on outdoor recreation was found in Outdoor Recreation in a Nation of Communities.

Personal communications with the West Virginia Governor's Office of Community and Industrial Development and the West Virginia Department of Commerce, Marketing/Tourism Division were made to determine the various responsibilities of their branches of government and to formulate and evaluate alternatives to address the objectives of the paper.

Contacts were made with the contracting section of the Monongahela National Forest to gather information about partnerships, cost-share agreements, and other methods of cooperating with the State and others. Internal Forest Service memos from those active in public information partnerships were the source of many ideas for potential opportunities (Elsner).

Alternative Action Items

The potential to increase the scope and effectiveness of public outdoor recreation information in eastern West Virginia, and in particular concerning the Monongahela National Forest and nearby West Virginia State Parks and Forests, is great.

To reach the traditional and new recreation consumers including the disabled, the non-traditional outdoor recreationist, the urban customer, and the elderly, it will be necessary to provide better pre-trip information. Maps and brochures should be designed to include the information these groups need to plan and enjoy a trip to the outdoors. New and innovative methods of information dissemination will be needed to reach these groups. As technological changes occur which change the way people use the outdoors, it will be necessary to use information systems to channel such use to the best sites, or to explain restrictions. The new emphasis on outdoor recreation at national, regional, and local levels will afford the agencies which provide the resources opportunities the ability to work together to serve the public.

To begin to address these needs, a list of potential action items was prepared. These action items, if implemented, would form the basis for a partnership in public information between the Monongahela National Forest and the state of West Virginia. The list follows.

* Jointly train and fund interpretive naturalists.

* Provide joint "good host" customer service training for receptionists and others who deal with the recreation customer.

* Prepare a coordinated marketing plan, including a comparison of marketing goals between the State and the national forest.

* Evaluate opportunities for redirection of over/under use of facilities or areas.

* Monitor customer satisfaction and information sharing about ways we could help each other provide a more satisfactory program.

* Publish a West Virginia Recreation Map which would show and list all State and Forest Service recreation opportunities, offices, telephone numbers, etc.

* Encourage networking between visitor center and State Park personnel.

* Install a National Forest exhibit, or a joint recreation exhibit, at Interstate highway information centers.

* Prepare a National Forest write-up for the State highway map.

* Prepare a State write-up for the Forest recreation map and include it on the next reprinting. Include State Park names, phone numbers, the CALL WVA number, etc.

* National Forest to provide information for the revision of "Camping West Virginia" and other State brochures on a continuing basis.

* Provide National Forest info to the State toll free number and train their people in National Forest recreation opportunities.

* Create a "National Forests of West Virginia" brochure.

* Redesign and reprint every National Forest recreation area brochure using a standard theme to promote recognition. In the redesign include list of State Parks nearby as well as text on what to do nearby.

* Hold a meeting of District Rangers and State Park superintendents to discuss recreation opportunities and share info.

* Develop and publicize the Scenic Byway(s). Include lead-in signing, on-site signing, brochures, etc. Coordinate with the national advertising effort by Chrysler Motors, Plymouth division.

* In cooperation with WVDOH, prepare and implement a signing program to provide comprehensive lead-in signing to all recreation facilities and opportunities.

* Host travel editor tours of National Forest and State areas.

* Make a video on West Virginia recreation to be shown on television and sold at visitor centers and State Parks.

* Develop a West Virginia wildlife viewing guide.

* Develop a West Virginia scenic tour(s) including both State Parks and Forest Service areas.

* Train personnel to serve as tour leaders for tour bus services which utilize State Parks and the National Forest.

* Include note about accessibility for disabled populations on all brochures and maps, both agencies.

* Have a series of articles written for "West Virginia Magazine" which would highlight the great joint opportunities available. Such things as Canaan to Blackwater cross-country ski trail through Monongahela National Forest, Cass Railroad, Canaan Valley, Blackwater Falls, etc., within easy drive of Seneca Shadows; and so on.

* Revise the National Forest Recreation Opportunity Guide to include better State information.

* Provide joint publicity on partnership opportunities, to identify partners and to publicize successes.

* Share campground hosts and other volunteers, part of the summer on the National Forest and part on State areas. May help recruitment.

* Utilize the financial flexibility of the National Forest Interpretive Association, Friends of the National Forests, etc., to acquire better high quality brochures and equipment.

* Develop an association of partners to assist in planning, coordinating the provision of services, and marketing.

* Provide partnerships in visitor centers.

V. Discussion

On February 16, 1989, a meeting was held with the State of West Virginia to decide which action items would be implemented. Attending the meeting for West Virginia was Michael D. Herron, Marketing/Tourism Director, Department of Commerce. Representing the Monongahela National Forest were Forest Supervisor Jim Page, Deputy Forest Supervisor Frank Koenig, Recreation Staff Officer Michael Herth, and the author. The list of action items was discussed and the following were selected for implementation.

1. A coordinated marketing plan will be prepared. The State will set up a meeting to begin work on this plan. The State, Forest Service, and local tourism organizations will be asked to participate. The meeting will be in March or April, 1989.

2. A West Virginia Recreation Map will be prepared. It will show both State and Forest Service opportunities. To begin this process, the Monongahela will identify the information which should be on it and forward that to Mike Herron in April. State graphics artists, photographers, and writers will be available to assist on this project.

3. The State will publish Monongahela National Forest information on the West Virginia Highway map. The Forest Service will send the information to the State as soon as possible, since the new map will be published soon.

4. The Monongahela National Forest will host a workshop for information training and update for both Forest Service and State employees. Target audiences will be the State Welcome Center and 800 number staffs and Forest Service receptionists and visitor center employees. The meeting will be held in April.

5. The Monongahela National Forest will begin a program of redesigning and reprinting all of its recreation brochures. Information on State Parks and Forests near Forest Service areas will be included in a "What is there to do here?" section on each brochure. Notes on accessibility for the dirabled will also be included on each. The State can help with grapnics, photography, and writing if needed.

6. The State and Forest Service will immediately begin coordination with national efforts to publicize the Highland Scenic Byway. Coordination with the private sector will be needed. A brochure and signing will be considered.

7. The State will publish a notice in their recreation newsletter to tell the public that the Forest Service is interested in developing "step-on" guide services for tour buses using the National Forest area. The Forest Service will then gauge the response and make a decision about future guide services.

8. The State is in the process of having a film made which would promote recreation in West Virginia. The Monongahela National Forest will cooperate in the funding and production of the film, and the State will have extra footage taken of Forest Service recreation areas. The film will be placed on video cassettes which may be used in tourist shows, on television, and at visitor centers.

9. The State will assist the Forest in writing and publishing articles about National Forest recreation in "West Virginia Magazine".

10. The Forest Service will take part in the next round of travel/tourism shows which the State annually attends. The next round will be in January to April of 1990.

11. The Forest Service will send a representative to the State Travel Fair in September, 1989 and will host Travel Fair tour buses the following day. The Travel Fair is an annual convention of private sector tour operators.

Other action items listed in the "alternative action items" section above will be considered for implementation after the eleven priority items above are accomplished. An evaluation of progress will be made during the regularly scheduled Forest Plan Monitoring review at the end of each fiscal year.

VI. Summary

The national, regional, and local impetus for outdoor recreation information partnerships has been documented. The need for better recreation information to serve traditional customers and to reach out to the new non-traditional users, such as the elderly and disabled, was identified. The USDA Forest Service and the State of West Virginia are in the position to form and implement partnerships in outdoor recreation. These partnerships will result in more accurate and complete pre-trip information for the public, and better on-site information and a more complete awareness of the opportunities available to the public. As a result, the outdoor recreation customer will have a more pleasurable experience in eastern West Virginia.

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